

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 2562

STADIS

FOR AF FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ACOM, PFOR, CM
SUBJECT: WATTS BASE STATION

REFS: A. STATE 171954 B. YAOUNDE 2426 C. YAOUNDE 2417

1. ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS IN PARA 3 OF REF A ARE INDEED NOT EASY, BUT THE FOLLOWING IS MY CONSIDERED JUDGMENT AT THIS TIME. IF THERE ARE FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN PRESENT NOT WHOLLY FORTUITIOUS CONJUNCTURE OF COMPLEMENTARY GURC AND US NEEDS, I MAY TURN SOMEWHAT MORE UP-BEAT.

2. PUBLIC REACTION WILL INDEED PROBABLY INCLUDE NEGATIVE ELEMENTS SUGGESTED IN PARA 3, QUESTION A. HOWEVER, GURC, WHILE NOT REPEAT NOT REPRESSIVE, FIRMLY CONTROLS MEDIA AND OTHER OVERT MANIFESTATIONS OF PUBLIC OPINION, AND MANAGES TO FIND AND CONFISCATE COVERTLY DISTRIBUTED UPC ANTI-GOVERNMENT PAMPHLETS, AND TO ARREST, INTERROGATE, AND WHEN APPROPRIATE RELEASE THEIR SUSPECTED DISTRIBUTORS. ONCE GURC MAKES UP ITS MIND TO APPROVE STATION, I WOULD EXPECT IT TO HOLD FIRM.

3. APPROACH TO PROBLEM OF QUID PRO QUO SUGGESTED IN PARA 3, QUESTION B, ALSO OCCURRED TO US, ESPECIALLY SINCE GURC ASKED FOR THE QUID BEFORE WE ASKED THEM FOR THE QUO. WE CANNOT YET PLACE A PRICE TAG ON QUID, SINCE CAMEROONIAN REQUEST WAS COUCHED IN GENERAL TERMS (REF C), THOUGH ECOUA SIAD GURC IS PREPARED TO COME
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 YAOUND 02562 151821Z

WITH LIST OF WANTED ITEMS. TOTAL INITIAL PRICE WOULD DEPEND UPON

VALUE AND PARTICULAR MIX OF ECONOMIC AND ARMS ASSISTANCE US COULD OFFER NOW. IF WE WOULD COME UP WITH A FAIRLY GENEROUS OFFER BEFORE WE INQUIRE ABOUT GURC'S WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT WATTS BASE STATION, SUBSEQUENT "RENTAL" OR ITS FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENT WOULD PROBABLY BE REASONABLE. OUR EXPERIENCE WITH GURC, AND ALSO WITH INDIVIDUAL CAMEROONIANS, E.G. ON HOUSING LEASES, SUGGESTS BOTH REASONABLENESS AND STICKING TO AGREEMENTS ONCE THEY ARE PROPERLY ENTERED INTO IN GOOD FAITH BY BOTH PARTIES. A VERY ROUGH BALL PARK FIGURE WOULD BE UPWARD OF \$5 MILLION IN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, PREFERABLY CONCENTRATED ON PRESIDENT AHIDJO'S FIRST PRIORITY, THE DOUALA-YAOUNDE SECTION OF THE TRANSCAM RAILROAD, AND FROM \$2 TO 5 MILLION IN FMS CREDITS. BUT THIS ESTIMATE IS A VERY ROUGH INDEED, SINCE EMBASSY HAS NEITHER SEEN GURC REQUEST LIST NOR IS IT WELL INFORMED ABOUT WHAT MAY BE AVAILABLE IN WASHINGTON.

4. LIKELY EFFECT OF A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN CAMEROON (REF A, PARA 3, QUESTION C) IS HARD TO GAUGE. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF GOVERNMENT IS INDEED AN ENCOURAGING FACTOR, THOUGH GURC ITSELF IS WORRIED ABOUT ITS INTERNAL OPPOSITION AND EXTERNAL SUPPORT IT IS RECEIVING FROM SOVIETS (REF C). MY OWN VIEW IS THAT AHIDJO IS IN FIRM CONTROL OF DOMESTIC SECURITY SITUATION, AS ALSO INDICATED IN PARA 2 ABOVE. MOREOVER, A HIGH PROPORTION OF GURC MINISTERS AND SECOND AND THIRD LEVEL OFFICIALS ARE YOUNG, COMPETENT. AND SELF-CONFIDENT MEN, WHO IN MANY CASES HAVE BEEN CO-OPTED OVER LAST SEVERAL YEARS FROM FORMER CRITICS OF REGIME. MY OWN EXPECTATION IS THAT, IN EVENT OF AHIDJO'S REPLACEMENT, WHICH IS RELATIVELY UNLIKELY IN SENSE THAT IT IS LESS LIKELY THAN IN SURROUNDING COUNTRIES, MOST OF THESE SECOND AND THIRD LEVEL LEADERS WOULD STAY ON, WITH PRESIDENT'S REPLACEMENT PROBABLY DRAWN FROM THIS GROUP. WHILE THERE IS CONSIDERABLE LESS CORRUPTION IN CAMEROON THAN IN COMPARABLE OTHER LDCS, THIS GROUP DOES HAVE CONSIDERABLE STAKE IN PRESENT SYSTEM AND ITS OVERALL POLICIES, INCLUDING FOREIGN POLICY. STAKE INCLUDES NOT ONLY OFFICIAL PERQUISITES, BUT ALSO PRIVATELY OWNED REAL ESTATE AND BOARD MEMBERSHIPS IN MIXED CORPORATIONS. THERE IS COMPLEX INTERLOCKING PATTERN OF GOVERNMENT CONTROL AND PRIVATE OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT - E.G. CAMEROONIAN BANK PRESIDENTS MOVED UP THROUGH MINISTRIES OF FINANCE AND ECONOMY -, CAMEROON DIFFERS FROM MANY OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN THAT IT HAS SEPARATE, DISTINGUISHABLE THOUGH OVERLAPPING ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUPS. SO FAR AS I CAN DISCERN, THERE IS NO REPEAT NO COHESIVE COUNTER-ELITE WITH

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 YAOUND 02562 151821Z

A COHERENT PROGRAM IN CAMEROON, WHICH WOULD BE CAPABLE OF REPLACING CURRENT GOVERNING CLASS. NOR HAVE I SEEN REPORTS OF SUCH A GROUP AMONG OPPOSITIONAL EXILES. FROM THIS I CONCLUDE THAT "LIKELY ATTITUDE OF NEW GOVERNMENT TOWARDS WATTS BASE" WOULD NOT DIFFER VERY MUCH FROM AHIDJO GOVERNMENT'S, WHATEVER THAT MAY TURN OUT TO BE.

5. IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE GURC'S ATTITUDE TO BE POSITIVE, US SHOULD, AS SUGGESTED ABOVE IN PARA 3, COME UP WITH A GENEROUS AID OFFER

BEFORE WE INQUIRE ABOUT WATTS. IN ADDITION, WE SHOULD WEAVE US AND CAMEROON INTO STABLY INSTITUTIONALIZED PATTERN OF INTER-DEPENDENCE, MUTUAL BENEFITS OF WHICH MUST BE CLEARLY EVIDENT TO BOTH PARTIES, AS WELL AS TO POTENTIAL DOMESTIC AND EXTERNAL TROUBLE MAKERS. IN ORDER TO MAKE BENEFITS OF BILATERAL INTERDEPENDENCE SELF-EVIDENT IN THIS SENSE, WE SHOULD THINK AHEAD BEYOND GURC'S CURRENT REQUESTS AND OUR WATTS NEED TO PREVENT APPEARANCE OF ONE SHOT DEAL. GURC GENERALLY PLANS PRUDENTLY, MOVES CAUTIOUSLY, BUT FIRMLY STICKS TO A COURSE ONCE IT IS DECIDED UPON. CAMEROON LEADERSHIP IS PROUD OF ITS COMPETENCE DEMONSTRATED BY ITS ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR, WITHOUT DISPLAYING ARROGANCE DOUNDED ELSEWHERE IN REGION. AHIDJO WANTS NOT ONLY THE AID REQUESTED, FOR WHICH HE SHOULD BE WILLING TO GRANT QUID OF WATTS, BUT ALSO, I BELIEVE, THE KIND OF RECOGNITION AS ELDER STATESMAN WHICH US HAS EXTENDED TO HOUPHOUET AND SENGHOR, WHO ARE IN THEIR SEVENTIES, WHILE HE WILL TURN FIFTY-TWO NEXT MONTH. HE DESERVES IT, AND ACCORDING HIM SIMILAR TREATMENT - CONSULTATION AT HIGH LEVELS, INCLUDING SECRETARY INVITATION TO WASHINGTON, ETC - WOULD NOT COST US MUCH AND BE IN US INTEREST GOING FAR BEYOND WATTS.

6. HOUSING MENTIONED IN PARA 5, REF A, WOULD BE AVAILABLE.
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